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BARRIERS TO NORTHERN SCHOOL DESEGREGATION.

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UNLESS THE RATE OF INTEGRATION IN NORTHERN SCHOOLS IN LARGE CITIES ACCELERATES, THERE WILL BE EXTENSIVE URBAN SEGREGATION UNTIL AT LEAST THE MID-21ST CENTURY. HOWEVER, DATA FROM SMALLER CITIES SHOW THAT THERE SEEM TO BE "UNIFORM" CONDITIONS WHICH FAVOR DESEGREGATION--NEGRO PROTEST ACTION, STIMULUS FROM EXTRA-LOCAL AUTHORITY, AND A LESS HIGHLY STRATIFIED RELIGIOUS OR RACIAL CLASS STRUCTURE. BUT THE CASE HISTORY OF "LITTLE CITY" ILLUSTRATES HOW THE ATTITUDE STRUCTURE OF BOTH RACES IMPEDES INTEGRATION. IN THE BIG CITIES, TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS TO THIS PROBLEM CAN BE BASED ON RATIONAL PUPIL ASSIGNMENT, REVISED BUILDING PLANS WHICH MAY INVOLVE PUPIL TRANSPORTATION, AND EDUCATIONAL PARKS. THESE SOLUTIONS ARE AVAILABLE BUT ARE RESISTED. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT NOT A SINGLE BIG CITY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT HAS MADE AN EMPHATIC COMMITMENT TO DESEGREGATION, A POSITION WHICH WOULD BE EXCEEDINGLY INFLUENTIAL. PRESERVATION OF THE "STATUS QUO" POWER STRUCTURE IS THE MAJOR MOTIVATION FOR OPPOSITION TO CHANGE AND IS RELATED TO POLITICAL AND EDUCATIONAL BUREAUCRATIC INTERESTS. CHANGE IMPLIES GREAT POLITICAL RISKS BUT WILL PROBABLY OCCUR IN MOST OF THE LARGE NORTHERN CITIES AS A RESULT OF THE FISCAL PRESSURES OF MAINTAINING GHETTO SCHOOLS AND AS SUPERINTENDENTS BEGIN TO ESPOUSE RACIAL BALANCE. (NH)

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Barriers to Northern School Desegregation

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The Current Scene

NORTHERN PUBLIC schools, from kindergarten to the graduate level, have been racially segregated on an extensive scale since the Reconstruction. Statistics have been collected by communities and states only since the Brown decision in 1954, but these show that *hundreds* of elementary and secondary schools in the Northeast and the Midwest have student bodies composed of more than 90 per cent Negroes.

The racial census released by the New York Education Department in 1962 is typical. Twenty elementary schools outside of New York City had over 90 per cent Negro pupils; forty-six had more than 50 per cent. A total of 103 was 31 per cent or more Negro.[1] And this was true in a state in which the proportion of Negroes within the total population of all but a few communities is less than 15 per cent!

In the largest survey of school segregation in the North to date,[2] 200 public school systems were studied. These were in towns spread across nineteen states, which included 75 per cent of the Negro population in the North. Some 1,141 schools were listed as having nonwhite enrollments of 60 per cent or more. About 60 per cent of these segregated schools were clustered in six of the larger cities: New York City, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, and Los Angeles. Most of the others were located in other large central cities or in neighboring suburbs. School segregation is thus so pronounced in certain cities in the North that if public schools are placed on a scale from all white pupils to all Negro, the great majority of them will cluster at the far extremes. Mixed student bodies are very uncommon.

However, as the New Jersey Supreme Court noted in June 1965, a public school need not be all or even 80 per cent Negro in order

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to be racially segregated. A school is racially segregated if the ratio of Negro to white students is substantially in excess of the ratio common to the community as a whole.[3] This definition applies to a school that is 50 per cent Negro in a community where Negroes comprise 20 per cent of the total population. It also includes a school that is 95 per cent white in the same community.

Minority segregated public schools in the North tend quite uniformly to have poorer facilities, less qualified staff, and inferior programs of instruction than majority segregated schools.[4] Even when differences in facilities are eliminated, minority segregation impedes both teaching and learning. Attendance at a minority segregated public school tends to reinforce the damage already experienced by children maturing in a milieu drenched with discriminatory stimuli. Indeed, attendance at a racially segregated public school is probably harmful whether the segregation is minority or majority. The isolation experienced by students in all-white schools stimulates ignorance, fear, and prejudice, just as it confirms the self-belief in inferiority among students in all-Negro schools.[5]

Protests were lodged by Negro groups against school segregation in the North on many occasions between 1917 and 1954. But the Brown decision brought awareness among educational decision-makers to a new focal point.[6] Only in the last decade have the gravity and scope of the problem been identified, solutions advanced, and resistance to change mobilized.

We are presently in the eye of a Northern storm of community conflict. The issue has been joined; it has become a one-sided question with but one set of social facts, all of which indicate that Negro racial segregation in schools is bad, and most that white segregation is bad, too. It has become a matter which *must* be dealt with if racial and cultural cleavages are to be resolved and if social inclusiveness within cultural pluralism is to be achieved. Moreover, the elimination of school segregation has, like all serious modern social problems, become an issue illuminated by an awareness of attendant *costs*: If school desegregation is to be achieved, public education, its political context, and its fiscal support must be changed too, in ways that are demanding, even harsh.

The pace of racial integration in Northern schools has been equivalent to that of integration in Southern schools, although the Southern pace quickened enormously with the incentive of federal aid in 1965. Most cities and suburbs in the six Northern states with a Negro population of 5 per cent or more contain at least one minor-

ity segregated school. Five to ten of these have been eliminated each year since 1960, while new ones crop up to replace them as populations redistribute. If no new rate of change develops, the North will exhibit deep and extensive racial segregation in its urban schools as late as the middle of the next century.

The Smaller Communities

There is little point in talking about Northern school segregation as a uniform condition. More than two-thirds of all the racially segregated public schools in the North are located in ten of the largest cities. There, population density, the hardening of ghetto boundaries, the class structure, and political organization, all militate powerfully against school desegregation. These must be distinguished from the hundreds of smaller urban communities where desegregation is not only as desirable but more feasible.

The communities in the North where school desegregation has been agreed upon and sometimes implemented effectively are all smaller cities and suburbs. Berkeley, California, is one.[7] There, the Board of Education authorized a citizens' committee to recommend approaches to the problem of segregation as early as 1958. The committee was established after pressure from the Berkeley chapter of the NAACP. It made several good suggestions, none of which was implemented effectively, however, for several years.

But in 1962, the Berkeley Superintendent, responding to pressure from CORE and to growing convictions about the educational undesirability of school segregation, secured his board's authorization of another citizens' committee. This group worked for nearly a year. It defined *de facto* school segregation as extant in any public school whose white to nonwhite ratio "varies significantly from the same ratio of the District as a whole." With this yardstick, the committee found that three elementary schools, one junior high school, and the high school were not segregated, while sixteen schools were.

The committee asserted that this condition was bad, blamed it on the concept of neighborhood schools and on housing patterns, and proposed ten programs for its elimination. These included redistricting, pairing of some schools, open enrollment, a program of curricular improvement, and the strengthening of services and facilities. Some of these potentially transformative proposals were implemented, including positive, fairly radical changes in the com-

position of junior high schools. Indicative of the mood of the community is the fact that, in 1964, two members of the Berkeley school board were re-elected in a recall election.

White Plains, New York, offers a comparable illustration and, as an Eastern community, is more relevant to the problem of Northern school segregation than is Berkeley.[8] The Board of Education and the Superintendent of Schools in White Plains were aware of "racial imbalance" in their system as early as 1961; they had instituted special services in the one elementary school which was roughly two-thirds Negro, and they had made a few minor adjustments as early as 1962. Beyond a concern with compensatory education and related services, however, there was little professional readiness to define school segregation as salient.

Two forces converged to change this. The Negro leadership of White Plains and the officers of the New York State Education Department in Albany exerted persuasive pressure. The leadership threatened political action, and the state officials offered assistance, advice, and a flow of information showing how school segregation (always referred to in communications as "racial imbalance") impaired public education. The Superintendent and his Board then began carefully planned but prompt, unanimous action to desegregate. They acted during 1964, the same year in which the Superintendent became convinced that "racial imbalance" was a blight on the level of professional performance of his administration and teaching staff. Had this redefinition not occurred, it is unlikely that change would have taken place.

Other small cities have desegregated their public schools during the last five years in response to similar political and educational administrative pressures, or for different yet functionally equivalent reasons. Englewood, New Jersey, and New Rochelle, New York, for example, desegregated under court orders. Other towns have desegregated for essentially social reasons, such as population change, special real-estate conditions, or cultural values. Greenburgh, New York, is a case in point. There, in one of four districts, school integration began early and has become a source of social pride.

From participation in several school desegregation programs in smaller Northern communities, I would speculate that there are some rather uniform conditions under which desegregation becomes *possible* politically and educationally. Negroes must protest in a visible, unequivocal manner. This protest must resonate positively with some segment of the white population which already

commands the attention of local schoolmen or board members.

Of equal importance is a clear, sufficiently intense stimulus from state or other extra-local authorities. Little change has occurred in Pennsylvania and Illinois, where many smaller cities maintain segregated schools because of weak state educational agencies. It also seems plain from case experiences that a community must be free from a very highly *stratified* class structure grounded substantially in religious or racial groupings. The prospect of too severe a change in the foundations of the local structure of social rewards is relatively certain to prevent school desegregation.

Illustrating Barriers in Smaller Cities

We can best depict these conditions and connect them with impediments to change within the school systems themselves through details from a case study of a smaller city on the Northeastern seaboard which moved to the edge of school integration but then drew back and renewed its efforts to preserve its historic ghetto. We shall call the community "Little City."

Interviews documented the belief that the *status quo* system of race relations persists in Little City, that the system is old and durable, and that most Negroes as well as whites in the community subscribe to and reinforce it, in spite of its disadvantages.

This *status quo* is common to hundreds of established, thriving Northern communities. Under it, Negroes are tolerated by whites and there is cooperation as long as the minorities accept the confines of what is a partial caste system. Whites assume that Negroes "prefer" to live in the Bilbo Area Ghetto (although a few families are sprinkled elsewhere in other low-income blocks). They also presume that Negroes will share unequally in the resources and services of the community, but that few Little City Negroes will ever aspire to upper-level occupational positions. They will instead aspire toward, and then be employed in, service and lower semi-skilled jobs.

There are, in other words, *niches* for Negroes in the residential, resource, and job structures of the community. The value of the *niches* to Negroes is dual. They supply more opportunities than are available in some other localities, and they are equal to those available to a small proportion of low-income whites within Little City. Historically, the *status quo* has been maintained because Negroes have fared better in Little City than they have reason to expect

they might fare elsewhere. In exchange, they have maintained polite civil relations.

This pattern has been challenged in Little City within the last few years. Nearly all Little City parents are aware of this challenge. A majority, regardless of race, try to suppress this awareness by attributing it to the work of CORE or other "outside troublemakers." The attempt fails, however, for the same parents have internalized the message from the nation at large that a fundamental change in race relations is taking place.

All of the imagery of school segregation among parents concentrates upon the Bilbo Street School and neighborhood, in spite of the zoning change and the fraction of Negroes located in other neighborhoods. Generally, most parents think of Bilbo as having a sound enough physical plant and as *equal* to all other Little City schools in quality of services. Some combine the two ideas and think of the Bilbo School as slightly superior to some other schools. A few Bilbo parents and a smaller minority of others say openly that the Bilbo School staff is inferior and, more significantly, that Negro children are less well educated than whites within the Bilbo School. Most Little City parents favor current school zones and desire *no change* in the future. They view the neighborhood schools as the best of all possible arrangements; they believe that revising the neighborhood concept would reduce Negro progress and produce added evils such as traffic hazards.

A few parents advance the idea that minor additional zoning changes and some "open enrollment" would be appropriate for Little City. About 20 per cent of the tax paying parents *favor* more change than this. Another 20 per cent would resist greater change with vigor, particularly if the concept of the neighborhood school, upon which the residential structure of the town is grounded, were altered drastically.

White parents in Little City, in the main, do not know what would be gained through school desegregation. In view of the saturation coverage of this question through the mass media, this suggests that they do not want to know. Most parents emphasize that Little City neighborhood schools at present all offer the same quality of education, that they use the same books and teach the same subjects. As one white father commented, "What difference would it make if 'they' sat next to a white child? How will they learn more that way?"

A majority of Little City parents believe, according to one of

them, that "There is no racial problem in Little City. Whatever trouble has developed has come from four or five hotheads who have turned this supposed problem into a political football." A Negro mother confirmed this interpretation: "I grew up in Little City and I have several children in school here and the schools give equal opportunity for all." A Negro couple followed this remark with the statement: "There is no racial issue here at all. If some people feel that there is, they are wrong or mistaken."

It is therefore not surprising that most parents see *no need* to search for desegregation. This indifference cuts two ways, however. At least half of the parents are vocally disposed to accept the Superintendent's and the Board's definitions of what is needed. They are tolerant of authority; they prefer clearly stated, authoritatively designed changes. They *trust* those in control of the public schools, and this trust extends into the area of race relations.

If the Board and the Superintendent announce that specific changes—short of radical revision of the neighborhood concept—are necessary, a majority of the parents would accept this definition of the situation at face value. Moreover, most parents believe that such changes are the province of the Board and the staff—that expert and authoritative leadership is requisite to decisions on problems of school segregation.

There are many ways in which segregation and any attempted resolution of it can touch off older social, economic, and religious tensions latent in the social organization of Little City. Neighborhood residents are aware of minute differences between localities; a sharply stratified class structure exists and will undergo stresses with changing racial balances.

In view of the nature and depth of these attitudes, planning for school integration and implementing even part of the plan must depend upon an exceptional convergence of counterforces. Little City, for instance, began to plan for integration because the State Commissioner of Education pressed for such action, because a secure, long-established local superintendent saw the value of desegregation as one part of a program of educational reconstruction, and because civil rights groups mustered an effective protest. These pressures were checked, however, by the death of the superintendent, by simultaneous changes in the composition of the school board, and through the failure of the civil rights supporters to sustain their protest over a two-year period. In other words, the requisite conditions for surmounting an entrenched partial caste

system, even in a single public institution such as education, are so elaborate as to be undone at any turn of events. The attitude structure of the public, Negro as well as white, is an enduring impediment, whether active or passive. In Little City, the views of teachers and other school officers were neither felt nor defined as relevant to the issue.

Fortunately, in the process of persuasion which leads smaller urban communities to decide to integrate public schools, the more salient conditions sometimes compensate for one another. Thus, a highly stratified local population with group interests invested deeply in maintaining school segregation may be moved nonetheless by firm sanctions from a state commissioner or superintendent. In New York State, for example, the present position of the Court of Appeals is that

> The Board of Regents, under authority of section 207 of the Education Law, has declared racially imbalanced schools to be educationally inadequate. The commissioner, under sections 301 and 305 of the Education Law, has implemented this policy by directing local boards to take steps to eliminate racial imbalance. These decisions are final, absent a showing of pure arbitrariness. . . . Disagreement with the sociological, psychological and educational assumptions relied on by the commissioner cannot be evaluated by this court. Such arguments can only be heard in the Legislature, which has endowed the commissioner with an all but absolute power, or by the Board of Regents, who are elected by the Legislature and make public policy in the field of education.[9]

Differently weighted influences, then, can combine to induce desegregation of public schools. There is a ceiling on how much any one influence fostering desegregation can compensate for resistances. Even court orders and sanctions from state superintendents are insufficient if no other factors are aligned in support of local change.

Perhaps most important in smaller communities is the fact that technical solutions are available in abundance. Small districts can be merged, zones changed, buses introduced, or schools paired. Old buildings can be revised in use, and new ones can be introduced to provide extra degrees of freedom. Several reasonable courses of action toward school integration are ordinarily apparent.

Moreover, in smaller communities, a board's decision to integrate can be communicated to parents clearly and quickly, in combination with programs of social preparation and civic as well as school staff planning. A touch of ingenuity, or merely the adoption of successful features of neighboring systems, also enables smaller

communities to make school desegregation a time for improving educational programs in general—for upgrading the quality of instruction or staff or facilities. This prospect and stories of success in integration are gradually becoming commonplace in the professional journals and newsletters of teachers and schoolmen, so the trend should quicken over the next few years.

The Big Cities

An improved rate of change in school integration in the smaller communities contributes little to the acceleration of desegregation in the great central cities of the North. While the suburb of Englewood, New Jersey, eliminates a single segregated school and, over a period of a decade, evolves better school services as a result, neighboring New York City will continue to be burdened with hundreds of highly segregated public schools.

There are technical solutions to minority school segregation in the great cities, but they are few in number and generally drastic in effect upon both the clientele and the practitioners. Rezoning, district reorganization, pairing, free transfer, and open enrollment are valuable devices, but to have any effect upon the problem as a whole, these schemes must be applied in a system-wide and combined fashion.[10] No one mechanism among these, and no combination of devices applied in some but not all sublocalities, will result in any significant change. Technical solutions attempted in pilot fashion thus far have failed or have proved ungeneralizable, because of population density in the big city ghettos and because of traffic congestion.

Several partially adequate technical solutions have been proposed for each of the larger Northern cities. The simplest of these is rationally planned assignment of pupils. Philip Hauser and others demonstrated in their report on the Chicago public schools that, if pupils were assigned to schools in terms of proximity and with full but not excessive utilization of seating capacities, many all-white public schools which are underutilized in that city would be desegregated, and many mainly Negro schools which are now overcrowded would be integrated and thinned out.[11] Rational use of seating capacity would probably reduce the level of school segregation within any one city by no more than 15 to 20 per cent. But, compared with a condition of no change, that is progress.

A second solution entails revising the building programs of city

systems so that the sites of all new and renovated structures are chosen with a view toward integration. This means a moratorium on the construction of schools *inside* burgeoning ghettos. Students would be transported in increasing numbers to schools located outside their neighborhoods. A third solution combines revision of building plans with the reorganization and combination of existing schools through pairing and complexes. In complexes, a series of neighboring schools engages in staff and student interchange.[18]

The two most promising technical solutions are also the most radical. One is the concept of the education park.[19] Here, big city systems would abandon neighborhood schools (or use them for very different purposes, such as community centers) and erect consolidated facilities housing from 5,000 to 20,000 students. Such a campus-style institution would be located to draw its students from a very wide residential base, one broad enough, perhaps, to surmount long-term changes in class and ethnic settlements. A second, related idea is to *merge* mainly white suburban school districts with increasingly Negro inner-city districts. District mergers could be achieved by state authorities and could break through ancient patterns of residential restriction.

These proposals imply enormous transformations in the character of public schools. Under contemporary urban conditions, use tends to follow facility. That is to say, if a new kind of physical plant is erected, whether a park, a parking lot, or a new type of school building, enthusiastic users tend to follow. The programs of instruction within an education park, moreover, based as they would be upon new resources of centralized administration and greater staff specialization and flexibility of deployment, would be a major innovation.

For a time, critics of school segregation in the big cities believed the situation to be fairly hopeless. Imaginable solutions like those mentioned above were viewed as infeasible both politically and fiscally. As discontent with urban public schools deepens, and as federal and state aid prospects grow, radical solutions to segregation which have major implications for quality of instruction begin to intrigue critics, specialists, and policy-makers alike.

Not all modes of desegregation contribute to improvement in the quality of public education, nor are technical solutions, by themselves, sufficient to stimulate either integration or excellence of program. If these qualifications are kept in mind, however, it becomes apparent that durable, system-wide excellence in big city schools

cannot be attained without integration, and that integration can serve not only the ideal of justice but also the urgent goal of better public instruction.

Sources of Resistance in Big Cities

Our view is thus that valuable technical solutions have been proposed and that fiscal resources for using them are becoming available. The political dialogue about school segregation rages in the big cities against this background of possibilities. Yet, little or no integration of public schools is taking place. After ten years of talk and five years of visible struggle, only Detroit among the six largest and educationally most segregated central cities of the North has made some progress. New York City, Chicago, and Philadelphia, among other major cities, are more severely segregated today than they were in 1954.

Partly, this is the direct outcome of the continuing northward migration of Negro families and the reciprocal flight of whites to the suburbs. Still, the evidence of virtual inactivity among city school boards (or rather the evidence of *no effort* save experiments with open enrollment, rezoning, and a handful of pairings) calls for more than a demographic interpretation.

We must look to the social and cultural bases of Northern big city life to understand why so little change has occurred. In the case of school segregation, especially, we must take into account the political context and the cultural milieu of urban public education. For example, in the great cities, any force toward desegregation is effectively countered by organized opposition. Big city school superintendents, however, get paid more, have better protective clauses in their contracts, command a greater power base, and receive clearer indications of the educational damages resulting from segregation. If a superintendent of a big city did define school segregation openly as a *major* educational issue, change toward integration would occur. Opposition can be squelched with counter-opposition.

Consider Chicago, where the role of the Superintendent, Benjamin C. Willis, illustrates the big city pattern. Superintendent Willis announced in 1963 that he considered proposals for altering neighborhood school boundaries in order to provide free choice to Negroes, or for transferring white students into mainly Negro schools, to be "ominous."[34] He informed his Board of Education that,

in his judgment, the manipulation of attendance and assignment procedures might prove disastrous educationally. Radical unions could increase as a result, he believed, and more white families might move out of the city and into the suburbs.

Plans to desegregate had been accumulating in Chicago nce 1960. These were submerged in litigation, direct and occasionally even violent political action, the intervention by invitation nd strategic intrusion of social scientists and educational experts fom the universities and the nation at large, and upheavals within the Board and the Office of the Superintendent itself.

There emerged from this a characteristic Northern urban attern. On August 28, 1963, the Chicago Board of Education received that some schools in the system were all-Negro in student composition, and that such "separation" might interfere with learning. he Board then appointed a distinguished Advisory Panel, including Philip Hauser, then Chairman of the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago, and Sterling McMurrin, former United States Commissioner of Education. They directed the Panel to suggest remedies.

The gap between Superintendent Willis and his own Boards suggested by one event at the same August meeting. The Board accepted Superintendent Willis's proposal to allow those pupils in th top 5 per cent of the city's high-school students to transfer to a other high school—*if* their present school had no honors progra. From this petty proposal stimulated intense public reaction. After massive white picketing, and after negotiation and review, th parents of several transfer applicants filed suit in the local Superi Court, requesting the judge to issue a writ of mandamus against Superintendent Willis on the ground that he had withheld the ass ignation of transfer. The Appellate Court upheld the order. I reply, Willis resigned in protest over the Court decision in order t show the irreconcilable difference between his Board and himself for the Board had directed him to transfer the students.

Two days after Superintendent Willis resigned, the Illinois Chairman of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools warned the Chicago Board of Education that the city's high schools might lose their accreditation if he ever found that the Board had infringed on the Superintendent's administrative prerogatives. And, two days after this warning arrived, the Board voted to refuse Superintendent Willis's resignation. Later, the Board voted to reconsider its previous order directing Willis to transfer students. Willis then withdrew his resignation.

The Advisory Panel on Integration made its recommendations in the early spring of 1964, after weeks of picketing, boycotting of stores as well as schools, and swirling controversy over this issue. Minor parts of the Panel's proposals were adopted by the Board in the fall, but by 1965 there was no indication that any important recommendations would be adopted. The report was not endorsed by the Superintendent.

A policy stand on school desegregation has not cost a single Northern big city superintendent his job. Superintendent Willis has been attacked politically for four years for his opposition to desegregation, yet these attacks have done little more than tarnish his professional and public image. New York City Superintendent Calvin Gross did not lose his job because of his stand on this issue.

More important is the fact that no Northern big city superintendent has committed himself emphatically to the pursuit of school desegregation. The barriers to school desegregation in large Northern cities will remain a subject of moot speculation until at least one such superintendent does take a strong, positive position and allows others to observe the consequences. The policy recommendations of city school superintendents are more than influential. They are profoundly indicative of changes in school practice, even where they are not determinative.

Sufficient Conditions for Inaction

There is probably one condition which is sufficient to maintain inaction on big city school segregation in the North: If preservation of the *status quo* on this question helps to preserve the present distribution of power in the community, the *status quo* will in all probability be maintained, while the dialogue about segregation continues. Public officials, including superintendents, do not take unnecessary risks. They do not press for significant social changes if the effects upon their own access to authority are not predictable and promising.

There may be no change, then, because the ability of the city superintendent and his board to act on any question of general interest in the community is limited by the risks that the central political agency, usually the office of the mayor, is disposed to take. "In order for anything to be done under public auspices, the elaborate decentralization of authority . . . must somehow be overcome or set aside. The widely diffused right to act must be replaced by a unified ability to act."[16]

In the case of school segregation, the "unified ability to act" depends upon relations among the superintendent, his board, and the political power structure of the community as a whole. No one of these elements will jeopardize another intentionally, although a mayor or a city council often transfers responsibility for this problem to the board of education in lieu of agreeing to act in unity.

Trivial Institutional Impediments

Teachers and principals play a minor role in the politics of school segregation and desegregation. They are vital to the success of any program of desegregation, for their attitudes and practices either reinforce a positive integrative trend and make an educational opportunity out of it or undermine the worth of any effort.

But their role in the decision process itself is minor. The segregation issue is a general political one, and most school functionaries are disbarred from participation in it except under crisis conditions. Crises include incidents where Negro protest groups have managed to unite with teachers' unions for specific pickets and boycotts; but these are very rare. Moreover, it is seldom obvious in the negotiation of conflicts exactly how the teachers' and principals' own interests are involved. When these are touched upon, substantial mobilization occurs, as with all other urban interest groups.

Junior-high-school principals in New York City, for example, were *not* asked for their opinions about desegregation nor did they place themselves in the dialogue. But when a State Advisory Committee recommended in 1964 that segregated junior high schools should be abolished and the grade structure of all junior highs revised, the stake of the principals was defined. Their current arrangements threatened, these lower-line officers organized and communicated their opposition to change. When the Superintendent made no response, the principals undertook a strong newspaper advertising campaign opposing reorganization.

Headquarters staffs often impede desegregation efforts in less direct ways. The administrative staff officials responsible for planning transportation, pupil assignment, and even renovation and new construction of plants, all make hundreds of technical decisions each year which impede or foster revision of the status quo.

Change is costly, not only in money but in demands upon skill. School planners resist alterations in population estimation procedures they have grown accustomed to over the decades "merely"

because ethnicity and changes in the distribution of minorities have not customarily been considered in detail. If a program of school desegregation involves administrative decentralization, then accountants, other business officers, and related staff workers must make socially costly adjustments that range from changing daily work procedures to changing one's place of work itself.

No values, and no pressures, dominant in the white majority community reward any readiness to change among staff members. The municipal educational bureaucracy, in short, responds much like any other institutionalized establishment. In the case of staff impediments, however, incomplete information, unimaginative assessments of feasibility, and an inability to innovate discourage desegregation more effectively than does the organized opposition of principals.

These resistances to change are trivial in their over-all contribution to the fate of the segregation question both because lower echelons do not have that much influence in policy decisions and because educators themselves are perplexed by competing messages and by a steady change in the salience of the issue within their profession. The National Education Association, the teachers' unions, the United States Office of Education, and some of the teacher-training institutions are now at work, through officers in charge of integration or "equal opportunity," emphasizing the importance of the question and the urgency of resolution. On this issue, these agencies work somewhat like the National Council of Churches in its limited bearing upon local Protestant congregations: There is a low ceiling upon the national association's influence.

Prospects for Northern School Desegregation

My argument has been that Northern school desegregation is not difficult to accomplish in smaller cities and suburbs. Where the school superintendents of such communities have allied themselves with state authority and have responded to the protest from their Negro clientele, desegregation has been proven politically safe as well as technically feasible. Moreover, the educational outcomes of most of the efforts to date have been highly encouraging to professionals. News of the revitalization and improvement of staff morale and daily practices within such changing systems is being exchanged constantly at educational conventions and through the professional media.

The major part of the problem centers in a dozen of the largest central cities. In these, very little movement toward desegregation has occurred. The political risks continue to be too high, and the rewards within the educational establishment have not been worth the effort.

The seasonal campaigns of the civil rights and Negro protest groups have become strategic, though insufficient, as a political force. These campaigns are strategic insofar as they maintain the level of priority on the segregation question and even, on occasion, heighten it. They are insufficient—even with annual improvements such as better publicity, broader constituency, and tighter alignment with other interest groups—because the big cities are too divisive and counter-protest is too readily available.

Moreover, school policy-makers know that very few citizens, Negro or white, are as intensely concerned with the educational question as they are with contending issues of housing, crime, and employment. Finally, there is not apt to be enough unity of leadership among Negro groups and politicians to allow for a much greater focus of effort on the school issue than has been achieved to date.

Nevertheless, some big Northern cities are likely to desegregate their public schools when their fiscal dilemmas intensify. Northern-style school segregation is expensive. In the big cities, school funds have been poured into the erection of expensive new plants to accommodate students in the burgeoning residential ghettos.[10] Funds that would once have been used to improve all-white schools in the developing or most desirable real-estate areas must now be diverted. The new ghetto schools that result, moreover, offer little political reward. They are not appreciated because they reinforce the ghetto and because the immediate electorate is a captive constituency that is apathetic about education. In white suburbs, a Negro ghetto school depresses real-estate values in its neighborhood. It is a standing advertisement *against* the educational magnetism to technical and professional workers seeking an alternative to city school facilities. It is often a sign of decadence and commercial deterioration to most whites.[11]

In the big cities, the issue has unraveled the sleeve of public education as a whole. For state and local policy-makers, and for chief administrators, school desegregation has great potential significance for the merger of school districts, the progressive consolidation of schools, the revision of grade structures, and whole programs of in-

struction. The issue also stimulates questions about the quality and equal distribution of facilities, the rights of substitute teachers, the assignment of teachers to one school versus another, and the *stability* of a career in neighborhood-school teaching in general. The dialogue in professional circles, particularly in Northern teacher-training institutions and among education reporters, even penetrates to the question of the viability of public education as it is now operated. The alternative most often imagined is one in which the public school system of the big city becomes a semicustodial institution serving the clientele of the welfare department, and where the advantaged white majority has elected either the suburbs or the private schools of the city.

The thesis is that, if public education cannot evolve toward its historic goal of *universality*, it cannot be maintained in its present form as a general municipal service. Much more than the question of racial segregation is involved in this conversation, but no other issue exposes the total dilemma so dramatically.

The most likely future response of educators to the problem of Northern school segregation will be to make important changes, but to make them only in the wake of the current period of identification of the problem, exploration of its implications, and political negotiation. The United States Office of Education's survey of the state of equality of opportunity in American schools, to be conducted under a directive in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, should have influence in this regard. The position of ancillary institutions, from the National Education Association to the Parent Teachers Associations, has just begun to become firm, let alone articulate.

When the question is somewhat commonly stated, and when the problem is extensively and authoritatively identified, some change toward desegregation that is more than random, or more substantial than token, will be achieved. In public school circles, this change will be noted first in the increasingly more open espousal of "racial balance" by Northern superintendents. Superintendents in many communities will acknowledge, through their conventions, journals, and professional associations in particular, that a "balanced system" is being defined as an educationally desirable system. "Racial balance" will come to be viewed as "essential" to quality. As the image becomes rewarding, superintendents will pursue it as their own *if* minority pressures are sustained and if majority resistance dwindles even slightly.

The ability to advance desegregation depends mainly on state

authority and on board and community politics. No social scientist expects a school superintendent to become a culture hero rather than an administrator of a municipal service. But the option to champion desegregation each year becomes less dangerous for superintendents. We should come to a time soon when only the very largest cities of the North, and only a few unaspiring little communities, will still operate segregated schools. The gatekeeper for the institution will be the superintendent.

References

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7. Adapted from "Chronicle" in *Integrated Education*, Vols. 10, 11, 12 (December 1964-January 1965).
8. The author was State Consultant to White Plains in the planning of school desegregation there.
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10. State Advisory Committee Report (Allen Report), *Desegregating the Schools of New York City* (Albany, N. Y., May 1964).
11. See *Report to the Board of Education City of Chicago by The Advisory Panel on Integration of the Public Schools* (Chicago, March 31, 1964).
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13. Nathan Jacobsen (ed.), *An Exploration of the Education Park Concept*, New York City Board of Education Arden House Conference, 1964.

14. Marcia Lane Vespa, "Chicago Regional School Plans," *Integrated Education*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (October-November 1963), p. 25.

15. Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson, *City Politics* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 104.

16. For example, the City Commission on Human Rights found that in New York City 45 per cent of the 1964-65 school budget went toward the planning and construction of minority segregated schools. See City Commission on Human Rights, *Study of the Effect of the 1964-1970 School Building Program on Segregation in New York City's Public Schools* (New York, 1964). Also, the Advisory Panel on Integration of the Public Schools in Chicago found that most of the 243 new schools and additions in Chicago from January 1951 to December 1963 were constructed in Negro areas.

17. This is particularly true where an older but contained little Negro ghetto "suddenly" swells with new arrivals. This was the pattern in Englewood, New Jersey, and New Rochelle, New York.